

University of Minnesota¹
 Agricultural Extension Service
 Folder 260

SOME IMPORTANT CHEWING INSECT PESTS OF ALFALFA

ALFALFA WEEVIL, *Hypera postica* (Gyllenhal). The principal damage is done by the larvae, which feed on the foliage. Heavy feeding gives infested fields a gray, frosted appearance. Overwintering adults lay eggs inside the stems early in the spring. In southern states some eggs may be deposited in the late fall. Larvae are pale yellow to green with a distinct white stripe down the middle of the back and a shiny black head. Most severe damage is to the first growth in the spring and to early regrowth of the second cutting. Alfalfa is the principal host plant.

CLOVER LEAF WEEVIL, *Hypera punctata* (Fab.). The larvae are quite similar to the larvae of alfalfa weevils except their heads are tan or brown, not black, and they are larger. They feed on alfalfa and the clovers, but seldom become numerous enough to cause economic losses. Natural control factors usually keep their numbers low.

GREEN CLOVERWORM, *Plathypena scabra* (Fabr.). Occasionally outbreaks of these slender, shiny, light green caterpillars will cause damage to alfalfa and clovers. They are very active and usually wriggle rapidly when disturbed. They are frequently heavily parasitized. There are other caterpillars which may also be found in forage legumes. One of the most common is the alfalfa caterpillar.

ALFALFA CATERPILLAR, *Colias eurytheme* Boisduval. This is a darker, velvety green caterpillar, which is the larva of the common yellow alfalfa butterfly. Control is seldom required.

VARIEGATED CUTWORM, *Peridroma saucia* (Hubner). The distinctive features of this cutworm are the light yellow, diamond-shaped spots aligned in a row down the middle of the back. The overall color of the worms may range from almost black to light greenish yellow or tan. This species of cutworm usually becomes most abundant during warm, wet seasons. Unlike many other species, the variegated cutworm will produce several generations per year. When present in large numbers, they frequently feed on the regrowth which follows cutting of the forage crop. This may delay the next crop and keep heavily infested parts of fields black. If an infested forage crop is windrowed, the worms may be found under the windrows.

WEBWORMS, *Loxostege* spp. Webworms are smaller caterpillars than the green cloverworm or alfalfa caterpillar. They are usually yellowish green with darker markings. The leaves on which the webworms feed are usually webbed together.

BLISTER BEETLES, Meloidae. Several species of blister beetles may be found in alfalfa. They may be black, gray, or iridescent purple. They are long, slender beetles with softer bodies than most beetles. Blister beetles frequently congregate in groups in parts of the field. The larvae feed on grasshopper eggs, so the beetles usually become numerous in years following high numbers of grasshoppers.

See Extension Folder 240 for colored illustrations of insect pests of forage legumes.

Pictorial Key To Some Important Chewing Insect Pests Of Alfalfa

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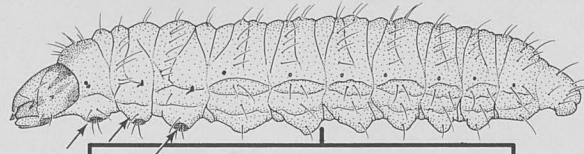
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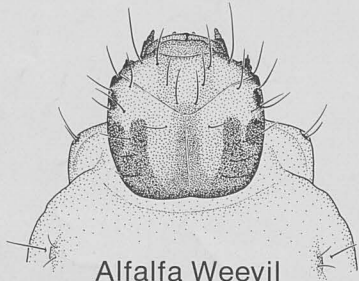


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THORACIC LEGS ABSENT

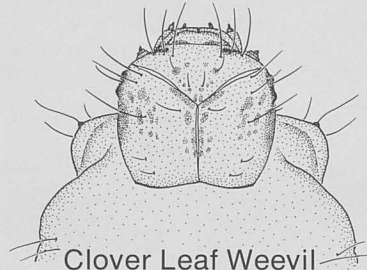


HEAD CAPSULE WITH AT LEAST POSTERIOR DORSAL PORTION DARK BROWN OR BLACK



Alfalfa Weevil
Hypera postica

HEAD CAPSULE LIGHT BROWN WITH POSTERIOR DORSAL PORTION NOT DARKER THAN OTHER AREAS



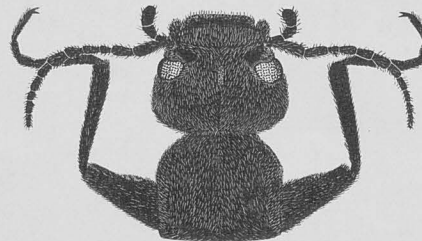
Clover Leaf Weevil
Hypera punctata

THORACIC LEGS PRESENT

ABDOMINAL LEGS ABSENT

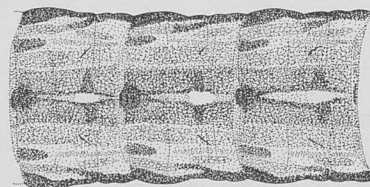


HEAD WIDER THAN PROTHORAX AND NOT PROLONGED INTO SNOOT



Blister Beetle — Meloidae

BODY WITH MID-DORSAL ROW OF WHITE OR YELLOW SPOTS; BODY SEGMENTS DORSALLY NOT WRINKLED

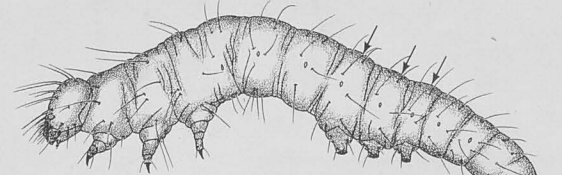


Variegated Cutworm
Peridroma saucia

ABDOMINAL LEGS PRESENT

FOUR MID-ABDOMINAL SEGMENTS WITH PROLEGS

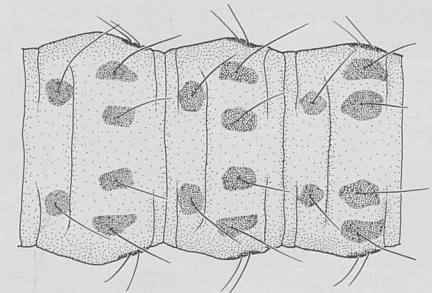
THREE MID-ABDOMINAL SEGMENTS WITH PROLEGS



Green Cloverworm
Plathypena scabra

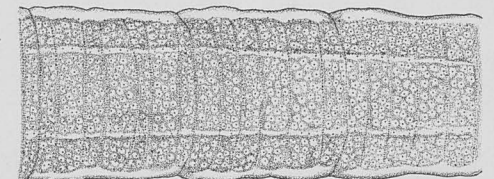
BODY SEGMENTS WITHOUT DORSAL DARK PLATES

BODY SEGMENTS DORSALLY EACH WITH FOUR TO SIX DARK PLATES



Alfalfa and Garden Webworms
Loxostege commixtalis and *L. rantalalis*

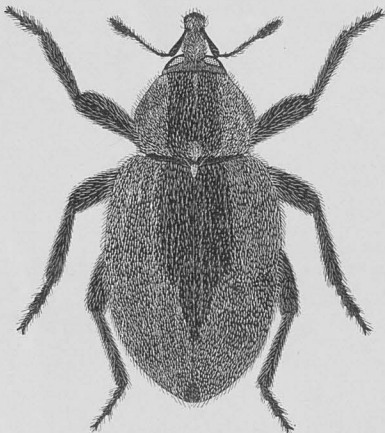
BODY WITHOUT MID-DORSAL ROW OF SPOTS; BODY SEGMENTS DORSALLY EACH WITH FOUR TO SIX TRANSVERSE WRINKLES



Alfalfa Caterpillar
Colias eurytheme

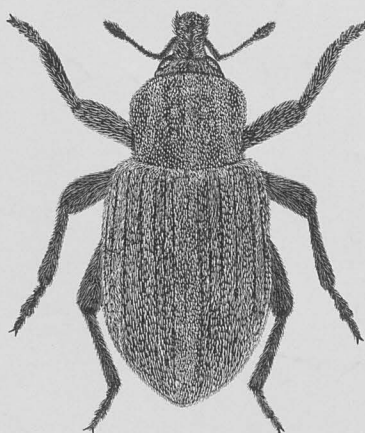
HEAD NARROWER THAN PROTHORAX AND PROLONGED INTO SNOOT BEARING ANTENNAE

LENGTH LESS THAN 1/4 INCH (5 MM.); ELYTRA USUALLY WITH MID-DORSAL DARK STRIPE



Alfalfa Weevil
Hypera postica

LENGTH GREATER THAN 1/4 INCH (5 MM.); ELYTRA WITHOUT MID-DORSAL DARK STRIPE



Clover Leaf Weevil
Hypera punctata